

U. S. Department of Agriculture
Extension Service

REPORT

By

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To

THE FEDERAL STAFF CONFERENCE

Washington, D.C., July 2, 1945

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A South-wide conference of State and district workers was held in Washington June 23 to 28, 1945. I shall not attempt to go into the details of the program of the conference, because the proceedings of the sessions are being compiled and will be ready for distribution in a few days. However, there are some high lights together with certain implications I should like to bring to your attention at this time.

First, the foreword of the conference: "The work of this conference will center on some major problems with which the Extension Service is concerned. A committee will be appointed for each of these problems. Each committee should meet and fully consider the aspects of the problem as presented by the speakers who cover the subject. The committee, after full discussion, should prepare a brief set of recommendations. These, after discussion and acceptance by the conference as a whole, should be used in the States by the supervisors in helping individual agents plan and carry on extension work to help rural people meet these specific problems." The major problems referred to were:

- (1) The Role of the Extension Service in the Postwar Cotton Program, by H. H. Williamson, Assistant Director of Extension Work.
- (2) Wartime Food Production and Conservation for Home Use, by Miss Mena Hogan, Field Agent, and Mrs. Marian B. Paul, State Agent, South Carolina.
- (3) A Program for Our Farm Youth, by Reuben Brigham, Assistant Director of Extension Work, and Dr. E. B. Evans, Dean of Veterinary Medicine, Tuskegee Institute.
- (4) Helping Veterans and Displaced War Workers Adjust Themselves to the Changing Agricultural Economy in the South, by D. Z. McCormick, Training Division, Veterans' Administration.
 - (a) Loans for Veterans Who Wish To Farm, by Paul Maris, Farm Security Administration, and C. W. Warburton, Farm Credit Administration.
- (5) Visit to the Nutrition Laboratory, Public Health Institute, Bethesda, Md., Dr. Floyd S. Daft, in charge.
 - (a) Visit to Freedmen's Hospital for a nutritional disease clinic, Dr. Walter Wilkins, U. S. Public Health Service, in charge.
- (a) Discussion of Progress in Enriching Corn Meal, Grits, and Flour, Dr. Reginald C. Sherwood, Office of Marketing Service.

- (6) How Shall We Help Extension Agents Improve Extension Methods, A Symposium on Extension Research and Planning, by S. P. Lyle, in charge, Agricultural and Home Economics Section; Dr. Gladys Gallup, Chief, Division of Field Studies and Training; and Lester Schlup, Chief, Division of Extension Information.

The conference functioned with six committees, each having a chairman and a secretary. Prior to getting down to work, the conference devoted its opening discussions to opportunities in connection with extension work with Negroes in the South. It was not convenient for Director M. L. Wilson to be with us at the opening, but he did come later in the week and brought a very inspiring message. H. W. Hochbaum, C. A. Sheffield, Dr. C. C. Spaulding, Paul C. Stark, T. M. Campbell, and the reporting agent discussed different phases of agricultural opportunities for Negroes in the South.

In the first place, the Negro State leaders who attended this conference were filled with appreciation and enthusiasm that they had the opportunity of coming to Washington to the Federal Extension headquarters located in the South Building. As I heard a remark some time ago that Washington to agriculture is what Jerusalem was to the Jews, the site of the national headquarters has great significance to everyone engaged in agriculture in the Nation.

Appropriate memoranda of appreciation were prepared by appointed committees of the conference of Negro State supervisors and approved by the group, and sent to Director M. L. Wilson and the State directors for making the holding of the conference possible. These were also sent to H. W. Hochbaum, H. H. Williamson, Reuben Brigham, C. A. Sheffield, and Miss Mena Hogan for the valuable assistance given in preparing the program for the South-wide Conference; and to Sherman Briscoe who did so much to make the visitors' stay in Washington quite pleasant.

As to the implication of the Conference, the launching of a Conversion Program for the Cotton South, Negroes are vitally concerned because so many of the race will be affected, either favorably or unfavorably, by this program. Quoting from the preliminary draft of the Conversion Program, "More than one-half of the Nation's farm population lives in the South. These people till about one-third of the Nation's cropland and receive about one-fourth of the Nation's farm income.

"Cotton is by far the most important cash crop in the region, accounting for nearly a third of the area's total farm income. About one-half of the South's 3 million farm families grow cotton, and it is the chief source of cash income for the great majority of those who grow it."

There are approximately 680,000 Negro farm operators in the States affected by this program, which involves the lives of about $4\frac{1}{2}$ million of the race. So one may see that the responsibility of the Extension Service to this large segment of the population means almost life or death to thousands of Negro people. Further, it is logical to consider how well the South is prepared to carry on an educational program intended for the prosperity of the South. It is an old saying that if you want to make money, go where money is. I will

reword the statement and say, if you want to help Negroes, go where Negroes are. Self-help is the most beneficial help. That is, an educational program carried on by the Extension Service that will reach the people living on the farms of the South whether they be small farm operators or operators of medium-sized farms does not matter. I wish to express the gratitude of my race to the Extension Service for the splendid consideration that the Negro farmers in the South have received from the very beginning of farm demonstration work under Dr. Seaman A. Knapp, when T. M. Campbell and the late John B. Pierce were the Negro agents appointed.

As a follow-up of the statement on how well the South is prepared to carry on an educational program, for many years it has been common knowledge that there existed a grave economic problem in the South, and on its right solution depended the happiness, welfare, and progress of that section. Also, it is beyond argument that there is quite a difference between recognizing a problem and solving that problem.

In the solution of this economic problem in the South, there is a program in progress that is taking visible form. Such a program was in the minds of several men of vision many years ago. In 1887, Hon. Henry W. Grady, in a speech at the Texas State Fair in Dallas, using as his subject, "The South and Her Problems," said:

"When every farmer in the South shall eat bread from his own fields and meat from his own pastures and disturbed by no creditor, and enslaved by no debt, shall sit amid his teeming gardens, and orchards, and vineyards and dairies and barnyards, pitching his crops in his own wisdom and growing them in independence, making cotton his clean surplus, and selling it in his own time, and in his chosen market, and not at a master's bidding--getting his pay in cash and not in a receipted mortgage that discharges his debt, but does not restore his freedom--then shall be breaking the fullness of our day."

Dr. Seaman A. Knapp, father of Extension Service, was another who saw a better day for agriculture, when the family would be the first consideration instead of money. In a speech at the ninth conference for education in the South, held in Lexington, Ky., May 4, 1906, Dr. Knapp said:

"But today I am not viewing this campaign for increased production in the country from the national standpoint. I am thinking of the people of rose-colored cottages in the country, of the strong glad father and his contented cheerful wife, of the whistling boy and dancing girl with school books under their arms, so that knowledge may soak into them as they go. I am thinking of the orchards and the vineyards, of the flocks and herds, of the waving woodlands, of the hills carpeted with luxuriant verdure, of the valleys inviting to the golden harvest. What can bring these transformations to the South--greater earning capacity of the people."

A third of the men of vision was our own Dr. Booker T. Washington, who saw a better day for all in the South. Speaking at the Atlanta Exposition in September, 1895, he said: "Cast down your bucket where you are."

For a long period, progress was a talked program with little being done. Circumstances forced upon the country a program of more sane conduct. The one-crop system had proved disastrous to agriculture, both for owner or tenant. Not only did the system fail because of unprofitable cash returns, but the land was fast becoming poorer and poorer. Each year rains and floods were carrying even the remaining topsoil downstream. The food of the masses of farmers in the South was poor. The housing was miserable, and the health and spirit of the people was fast becoming like the soil carried downstream.

A need for new leadership in agriculture could be seen before the outbreak of World War I -- a leadership with a program that would lead those engaged in agriculture away from poverty. Here and there in the South such leadership was started. Instead of campaigns, programs were put into effect, and problems were studied and solved. What have the results been in the past quarter of a century, especially in the last 10 years? For instance, we have seen King Cotton dethroned, and there has been raised instead a democracy of diversified farming that is growing in favor in the hearts of the people. The South is a land where human welfare and human values of all the people must be provided for, if permanent and real progress is to be made.

In the present agricultural program of the South, four concrete objectives or goals are being set up: (1) A live-at-home program for every rural family regardless of race or tenure. (2) Informing each farm operator on the importance of fertile soil and its conservation, that he may get the best returns for his labor and investments. (3) Encouraging the farmer to change from a one-crop system, because it is not best over the years, either for man or the land. (4) Improving the home life of the family as a direct contribution to the health and spirit of that family, regardless of race or station in life.

To say that there is an economic program in progress does not say that all the people have come under the spell of this new program. The masses of people do not change overnight. To further this program calls for educating all the people that should be helped. The masses do not suddenly turn from an old custom to a new practice, even though the new practice is an improvement over the old. Therefore, all concerned must be educated into this new agricultural program--both those who learn fast and those who are slow to learn.

Ignorance, poverty, and dissensions are a curse to any people. In the South today the leadership is fast falling in line to favor education for all the people. The educational system through the land-grant colleges, State-supported and private institutions for whites and Negroes is recognizing that colleges are for the people and not the people for the colleges. Colleges must not dismiss their commencement procession on the rostrum at graduation time, but must march down the aisle off the campus and back to the communities where people live and wait for light. It is through this kind of education that a new South is rising.

It is not that the people of the South have been so lazy physically that they are poor. We have worked, and our parents before us worked and worked hard for many years. There are various reasons why this labor has not been so fruitful as it could have been. It will do no good to discuss the whys. But

it does mean a lot to know that in the new leadership coming to the front, a different interest is being shown in landlord-tenant relations. Not only is it a human consideration to reward honest labor but it is good business to do so. Dependable labor is an asset. Recognition of the fact that efficient labor is required and that labor is entitled to a higher standard of living is a definite part of the new agricultural program of the South. The progressive farmer of today is not content to stop at knowing, but wants to put into effect a program that will lead to his success and to the comfort of those dependent upon him. Therefore, whole families are to be seen, in scores of cases, engaged in this progressive agricultural program that is lifting the South to a new high level—a level never seen or enjoyed by so large a group before. This idea is not fantastic but can be observed in practice by traveling in many communities and seeing what is happening to hundreds of rural families of the race in the southern regions of America.

The leadership of land-grant colleges, State and private colleges, philanthropic organizations, experiment stations, Federal and State agricultural agencies, State and national farm organizations are joining hands in education, effort, and cooperation to find and lift the lost group that exists in the South below the wholesome standard of living that is possible for all to reach. Because of this movement, which has not just started, the program is now larger than that illustration in the Scripture, "The size of a man's hand." It is fast spreading to every section through neighborhood leadership reaching down from the governors of the Southern States to the dwelling of the most backward rural family on the creek or mountainside.

It is a definite trend now, rather than an exception, for Negro farm families to enjoy a higher standard of living in food, clothing, housing, intelligence, and year-round cash income than they did a decade ago. Especially is this true in counties and communities where the race has the service of a Negro farm or home agent or both, as well as other agricultural agencies contributing to the welfare of rural community life.

It is fast becoming a rule to find families with a half-acre garden or larger, seven or more varieties of vegetables in the garden the year round, and from 300 to 500 jars of canned vegetables and fruits, canned pork, beef, and poultry put away for future use. There are families that have 50 to 1,000 chickens. An increasing number are raising 25 to 2,000 turkeys for the market. There are families selling regularly on curb markets or to special trade. They are joining in selling hogs and beef cattle by the truckload. There are many Negro farm families whose annual income is double and treble what is commonly believed to be the income of the southern Negro farmer.

It is the rule rather than an exception for county and local officials to cooperate in offsetting State and Federal appropriations to employ Negro county and Negro home agents to work with Negro farm families. It is a rule rather than an exception for the landlord to encourage his tenants to follow a live-at-home program. As a rule, the intelligent and thrifty Negro families of the community are the families that get the respect and confidence of the neighbors—white and Negro.

Too long the South has borne the stigma of a low standard of living because of the miserable farm cabins standing in the fields and woodsidcs, by highways and railroads where people pass, and back from the highways where few human feet

ever tread. Too often there live in these cabins human beings that the new day of hope and help has not reached. Too often there is no garden, there are no chickens, no hogs, no cows--nothing but poorly clad and poorly fed children and adults. How many make up this host? Legions. To a progressive South and a land of opportunity like America, these miserable people are lost. It is this group that presents the challenge to trained leadership.

A story is told of a child lost in a large field of grain. The parents were panic-stricken and the neighbors gathered at the grainfield to help find the lost child. At first there was an unorganized search made for the child with no effect. Then someone said, let us organize and join hands and comb the field by sections. The neighbors joined hands, men, women, and older children, and walked abreast across that great field looking for a lost child. As the story goes, the child was found, a child saved to the joy of its parents and neighbors. Why? Because the people thought, they organized, they moved together and abreast

Under God, I feel Extension Service is able to meet this challenge and find and lift this underprivileged group through the proposed conversion program for the cotton South--if such a program is wisely and justly administered.

P R O G R A M
July Extension Conference

Monday, July 2, 1945

Morning Session, 9:30 a.m. to 12 noon

R. J. Haskell--Presiding

Opening Remarks	M. L. Wilson
Finances	W. H. Conway
Victory Gardens	Paul Stark and H.W.Hochbaum
Editors' Advisory Council	Lester A. Schlup
Extension Service Review (a house organ)	Clara Bailey
Clothing Collection Campaign	Alice Sundquist
Fat Salvage	Karl Knaus

Afternoon Session, 2 to 4 p. m.

Virgil Gilman--Presiding

Columbia University--Extension Readability Workshop	Ralph Fulghum
Conference of State Leaders of Extension Work of Negroes ...	John W. Mitchell
Conducting Extension Radio Schools	Al Bond

Tuesday, July 3, 1945

Morning Session, 10 a.m. to 12 noon

Anna J. Holman--Presiding

Extension and Agriculture in Foreign Lands

Hawaii	Reuben Brigham
India	Laurel Sabrosky
South America	Aubrey Gates (Director, Arkansas)

Afternoon Session, 2 to 4 p.m.

K. F. Warner--Presiding

Food and Agriculture Situation the World Over	Eric Englund (FAR)
Africa	Thomas M. Campbell

Wednesday, July 4, 1945

Field trip to Agricultural Research Center, Beltsville.